

# REPORT TO EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

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## I. CHALLENGE OF EDUCATING BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN IOWA

- Unique population
  1. Small numbers – fewer than 500, birth to 21 in Iowa
  2. Widely distributed – urban, rural, and mobile
  3. Highly diverse – 60% with additional disabilities
- Expensive to serve
  1. Technology – necessary, expensive, and rapidly changing and improving
  2. Teachers – highly specialized, shortages especially in rural areas
  3. Expanded curriculum – greater teaching time and need for intentional instruction in areas such as orientation and mobility, daily living skills
  4. Parent support, networking and education – feelings of isolation and need for information and role models

## II. ROLE OF IBSSS IN EDUCATION OF BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN IOWA\*

- Develop a statewide system for education of blind and visually impaired students
  1. Formation of ad hoc leadership team including AEAs, IDB, DE, and IBSSS
  2. All parties committed to goal to create a unified system with IBSSS as a central agency to recruit, train, supervise, and deploy all teachers of visual impairments and all orientation and mobility instructors in the state. (Currently 50% are IBSSS employees)

\* Based upon the work of the Coordinating Counsel for Vision Services in Iowa, a joint effort by the Board of Regent and the State Board of Education, and made up of 19 stakeholders including parents and former students, in 2005-2006 Their task was to provide recommendations about how to provide vision services in the most effective and efficient manner, making use of existing fiscal and personnel resources.

- Develop flexible, targeted and regionalized services from IBSSS
  1. Short term classes at IBSSS – weekend sports camp, parent-child retreats, specialized technology classes, Braille literacy classes, three week summer school program
  2. Regional services – summer school on ISD campus (20 new families to summer school in 2006), summer day school programs planned for Des Moines area for 2007, parent-child-educator “Saturday School” clubs established in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids
  3. Specialized consultative services – speech language pathologist, physical therapist, adaptive physical education, early childhood

**III. PROVIDE CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPERVISORY SUPPORT TO ASSURE A SUPPLY OF HIGHLY TRAINED, COMPETENT STAFF**

- Collaboration with UNI for teacher training program both in Cedar Falls and on ISD campus in Council Bluffs
- Direct teacher support from two administrators with teaching credentials in field of visual impairments
- Ongoing professional development with opportunities for college credit